

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2605
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBAN 0435

FROM AMBASSADOR BOWDLER

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV SF
SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST ARTICLES
ON SOUTH AFRICA

REF: STATE 151195

1. WHILE THERE ARE GROWING SIGNS OF FERMENT WITHIN RANKS OF
AFRIKANERDOM OVER QUESTION OF CHANGE, THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS
THAT IT HAS REACHED A LEVEL TO JUSTIFY OTTAWAY'S ASSERTIONS
THAT THE BATTLE LINES BETWEEN VERLIGTE AND VERKRAMPTE FACTIONS
ARE BEING DRAWN AND THAT A SPLIT IN THE NATIONAL PARTY IS
IMMINENT.

2. REPORTERS FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING PRESS (FLEUR DE VILLIERS,
S. P. SERFONTEIN AND OTHERS) OVER PAST TWO WEEKS HAVE BEEN
WRITING HIGHLY SPECULATIVE PIECES ABOUT JOCKEYING FOR POSITION
IN THE SUCCESSION SWEEPSTAKES (THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS VORSTER
PLANS TO STEP DOWN) AND LIKELY CHANGES WHICH THE CABINET COMMITTEE
ON MODIFICATION OF THE WESTMINSTER SYSTEM IS LIKELY TO PROPOSE.

3. WHAT ACTUAL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION HAVE SURFACED CENTER ALMOST
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EXCLUSIVELY AROUND THE KOORNHOF SPEECH AND REACTION THERETO
(CAPE TOWN 863 AND 995). HERMETIC QUALITY OF CABINET,
NATIONAL PARTY CAUCUS AND BROEDERBOND DISCUSSIONS OTHERWISE
CONTINUES.

4. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THE DISCUSSIONS TOUCHED
OFF BY THE KOORNHOF SPEECH HAVE TAKEN PLACE ENTIRELY WITHIN

THE CONFINES OF THE SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND NO MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURE -- INCLUDING KOORNHOF -- IS ADVOCATING POWER SHARING IN THE SENSE OF ALLOWING COLOREDS AND INDIANS, LET ALONE BLACKS, TO PARTICIPATE IN A COMMON PARLIAMENT. I DO NOT READ VILJOEN'S COMMENTS TO JOHN BURNS AS ANY DEVIATION FROM THIS CONCLUSION.

5. DEPARTMENT IS CORRECT IN ITS JUDGMENT THAT OTTAWAY HAS OVERDRAWN THE DIVISION BETWEEN VERLIGTE AND VERKRAMPTE LINES. WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT THERE IS ANY SERIOUS EFFORT UNDERWAY BY THE NATIONALIST LEADERSHIP TO INTRODUCE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE SYSTEM. ON THE CONTRARY, PIK BOTHA'S RHETORIC OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAS, IF ANYTHING, AROUSED AFRIKANER FEARS ABOUT MAKING CONCESSIONS AND THEREBY STIRRED UP LAAGER INSTINCTS. OTTAWAY'S ARTICLE OF JUNE 29 (STATE 151593) REPEATS ANOTHER FACET OF SAG LINE DESIGNED TO WIN SYMPATHY AMONG LIBERALS OVERSEAS IN OVERALL EFFORT TO FORCE CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD SOUTH AFRICA.

6. IF, AS IS GENERALLY EXPECTED, THE NP LEADERSHIP BEGINS TO CHECK OUT MODIFICATIONS IN THE WESTMINSTER SYSTEM WITH THE RANK AND FILE AT THE AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER PROVINCIAL PARTY CONGRESSESSES, WE WILL GET A BETTER INDICATION OF WHAT CHANGES VORSTER HAS IN MIND AND WHAT DIVISIONS THEY ARE LIKELY TO PROVOKE. IN THE MEANTIME, WE SHOULD MAINTAIN A PRUDENT RESERVE ABOUT HOW PROFOUND THOSE CHANGES WILL BE AND HOW CONFIDENTIAL

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MUCH REAL DISSENSION IN AFRIKANER RANKS IS LIKELY TO SURFACE GIVEN THE ATTITUDE THAT "SURVIVAL" REQUIRES UNITY.
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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